

Senate Bills of Interest - Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services

Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
SB 7	Nelson, Patrick	Redesign Medicaid services for individuals requiring long-term or acute care services, establish pilot programs to test managed care models for providing those services at specific premiums and set up an advisory committee of stakeholders from the disability community to advise HHSC on acute care service design. Bill would also call on HHSC to evaluate and implement if feasible a process that would automatically enroll persons with disabilities in Medicaid managed care.	Increase efficiency in services. Amendment 26 restricts Texas' ability to expand Medicaid to low income adults without legislative approval.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 44	Zaffirini, West	Prohibits DFPS from registering child abuse or neglect solely because a person relinquishes a child in order to obtain mental health services for the child. Requires DFPS to document and report the extent of mental illness among children for whom it serves as managing conservator, and how many were relinquished solely to obtain mental health services.	Empowers people impacted by previous DFPS cases to petition to remove the abuse or neglect record. Will provide access to care for greater numbers of children in need of services and will improve outcomes for those children. Will also give a more accurate picture of the need for mental health services for children.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 49	Zaffirini	Requires that children with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are in DFPS-licensed residential care be included in the Texas Promoting Independence Plan. Would allow these children timely access to Medicaid waiver services.	Will improve outcomes for eligible children.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 50	Zaffirini	Requires the Children's Policy Council (a community advisory committee to the legislature) to increase its representation of families of children with mental health disabilities. The CPC would add three new members (one of whom must be younger than 25 years and receive mental health services) and add mental health services to the issues it addresses.	Will offer new opportunities for addressing mental illness in children.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 58	Nelson	Requires the HHSC to integrate behavioral health services (including targeted case management and psychiatric rehabilitation) and physical health services into the Medicaid managed care program.	Would increase the number of providers for behavioral health and physical health services, increasing access and coordination for those in need.	6/14/13 signed by Governor

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SB 109	West, Hinojosa	Adds youth aging out of foster care, veterans and farmworkers to the populations considered in the Texas State Low Income Housing Plan.	May result in the allocation of resources to meeting the housing needs of these vulnerable populations in Travis County. Demand for low-income housing units vastly exceeds the supply of these units.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 126	Nelson	Allows for creation of reporting system for community mental health and substance abuse providers, as data on services provided by contractors with DSHS is not currently available to stakeholders and the public at large.	Will increase transparency and accountability for contracted services. May yield a more accurate picture of gaps in services as well.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 127	Nelson	Examine feasibility of placing a cap on percentage of public health funds that can be used on administrative costs at local health departments and health service regions, examine most cost effective options for performing public health evaluations, develop funding formulas for federal and state funds appropriated to the department to be allocated to local health departments and health service regions based on population, population density, disease burden, social determinants of health, etc.	May produce staffing efficiencies for local public health departments. While changes in funding formulas may result in short-term losses for local health departments, allocations based on disease burden, social determinates of health and population rather than historical funding levels is preferable in improving public health. May necessitate more robust local data collection systems to identify local characteristics of disease burden, population and social determinants of health.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 193	West	This bill addresses a statutory concern regarding the requirements for a community housing development organization (CHDO) to claim a tax exemption. Specifically, it requires CHDOs to file an audit with the appraisal district and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs in order to receive a tax exemption for property used to provide affordable housing.	May increase the number of CHDOs providing affordable housing in the community. May remove barriers for CHDOs already operating in the community.	6/14/13 signed by Governor
SB 245	West, Nelson, Uresti	Identical to HB 1100. Amends requirements relating to the eligibility of a child advocacy center to contract with the state to provide services for children and families in child abuse and neglect cases. If passed, centers must implement the following evidence-based standards of practice: a case tracking system, a child-focused setting, comprehensive case management and victim support services, coordinated forensic interviews, specialized medical evaluations,	This bill would help streamline services and promote best practices across systems of care for affected children and families.	05/24/2013 signed by Governor

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Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
		trauma-focused mental health services, and culturally competent services.		
SB 348	Schwertner, Deuell	Identical to HB 1159 and similar to HB 1066. Creates a utilization review process at the HHSC for contracted organizations in the STAR+PLUS Medicaid managed care program. Would increase oversight and accountability of managed care organizations to ensure appropriate spending on premium and administrative payments.	A cost-control measure that may not have a direct local impact but important to monitor.	05/18/2013 signed by Governor
SB 353	West	Identical to HB 817. Allows emergency shelters to serve unaccompanied minors and their children for up to 14 days, and to do so without being licensed by the Department of Family and Protective Services.	May provide safe emergency shelter for minors.	05/25/2013 signed by Governor
SB 376	Lucio	Similar to HB 296. Expands participation in the national school breakfast program to 1) districts in which at least 10% of enrolled students in one or more schools are eligible for free or reduced breakfast and 2) all students of districts with 80% or more eligibility for free or reduced breakfast.	May improve nutrition, diet, and overall health for children in the impacted school districts.	05/24/2013 Signed by Governor
SB 406	Nelson, et. al.	Identical to HB 1055. Sets parameters for the process by which physicians delegate and supervise the prescribing and ordering of drugs and devices to advanced practice registered nurses and physician assistants.	May mitigate provider shortages.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 421	Zaffirini	Establishes a statewide consortium to develop local mental health systems of care for minors in residential or inpatient mental health treatment or are at risk of being removed from their homes	Could improve outcomes for minors with mental health issues.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 423	Nelson	Identical to HB 1679. Implements a “flexible response system” for child abuse and neglect cases investigated by the Department of Family and Protective Services. Allows DFPS to limit interventions in less severe or urgent cases to safety assessments, family assessments, and service/support referrals.	Would only apply to less severe cases (mostly neglect) involving children aged six and older. May allow families access to services and support without designating a “perpetrator,” and thus improve outcomes for affected children and families.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor

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Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
SB 425	Nelson	Similar to HBs 1180 and 1686, identical to HB 1681. If passed, this bill would codify a previously recommended policy. Requires that DFPS caseworkers consult with involved parties before making foster care placement decisions, except in cases of emergencies.	It may decrease the number of times children change placements in foster care by mandating receipt of input from any guardian ad litem, attorney ad litem, and court-appointed volunteer advocates.	05/25/2013 signed by Governor
SB 426	Nelson, Deuell, West	Requires HHSC to serve at-risk pregnant women and families with children through an evidence-based home visiting program. Would require HHSC to develop an outcome evaluation and report back to the Legislature.	Targets multiple favorable outcomes for women and families, including maternal and child health, child development, school readiness, abuse and neglect prevention, and family economic self-sufficiency.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 430	Nelson	Identical to HBs 764 and 1683. Requires that all community resources are exhausted before DFPS may provide day care services for children in the foster care system. Would require foster parents to provide DFPS with documentation verifying attempts to find day care through community services, including Head Start programs, pre-K classes, and early education programs.	May pose increased hardships for struggling families. In some cases, may bring about a shift of costs from state-funded programs to local agencies for child care and therefore place more demand for services on affected local agencies.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 462	Huffman	Allows county commissioners courts to establish specialty court programs, including family drug court for DFPS cases. Allows a court to dismiss charges for some individuals who complete a specialty court program, such as drug court and Veteran's court.	May not impact Travis County, as there are already a number of specialty courts in operation. Would increase access to services for those in the judicial system, particularly substance abuse counseling and treatment. Drug courts have a proven track record of reducing substance abuse rates and crime rates. Graduates of specialty court programs have significantly lower repeat offenses.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 646	Duell	Several provisions relating to court-ordered outpatient mental health services. Provides for modified hearings, orders for temporary detention in an inpatient mental health facility, and applications for inpatient services. Stipulates that failure to comply with a court order is grounds for contempt of court or involuntary administration of psychoactive medication.	Local impact unknown. Orders of temporary detention (up to 72 hours) could affect already scarce bed availability for non-forensic patients in inpatient mental health facilities.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor

Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
SB 659	West	Allows the Department of Housing and Community Affairs to establish a policy for debarring a person from participation in programs –specifically allows debarment if a person did not comply with conditions of programs, including land use restrictions or is listed as debarred from participation in federal housing programs by HUD.	Appears to affect developers, contractors or other providers of housing and related services. May improve administration and/or quality of affordable housing programs.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 718	West	Amends current law to make the FitnessGram Program optional to all public schools rather than a requirement. Authorizes a school district to assess the physical fitness of students in grades three or over, and submit de-identified performance results to the Texas Education Agency. Requires school districts to publish information regarding physical activity policies, food service guidelines for restricting access to vending machines, and policies prescribing penalties for tobacco product use on school grounds. Similar to HB 2052 and SB 684.	Some of the provisions of the bill may encourage exercise and healthy life styles among school age children. May improve health outcomes for children and school staff.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 769	Uresti	Requires DFPS to establish a pilot program to provide specialized training to foster parents of children who have been traumatized or have serious mental health needs. This bill would implement the two-year pilot program in Bexar County, coordinated as part of community-based services and support provided under a wraparound individualized planning process for foster children as prescribed by the Texas Integrated Funding Initiative Consortium.	May improve outcomes for affected children. An important development to monitor though no local impact.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 831	Taylor	Orders DSHS to work with TEA and regional education service centers to provide each school district with an annually updated list of best practice-based programs for implementation in schools in the following areas: substance abuse, early mental health intervention and mental health promotion, positive youth development and suicide prevention. Allows for the adoption of district-specific policies surrounding identification of students in need of related services.	May raise awareness of mental health disorders and stem the increase in demand for services that is evident across the state and in Travis County.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor

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Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
SB 853	Taylor	Similar to HB 1585. Mandates that policy holders of major medical insurance policies receive written notice of a premium increase no less than 60 days before effective date of the change.	This bill provides policy holders with more information about price and value of health care services than they are currently afforded. It is widely viewed that policies such as this create more savvy health care consumers that are able to shop around for best price and value and that this will drive health care costs down.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
CSSB 872	Duell	Allows a county to credit up to four percent of the county's general levy on Intergovernmental Transfer (IGTs) to the state toward eligibility for state assistance for indigent health care if the transfer was to provide health care services as part of a specified waiver program. Companion HB 3733.	Travis County and any other counties making intergovernmental transfers (IGTs) under the 1115 Waiver will get credit for up to 4% of the county's general levy toward its 8% threshold to draw down state funds for indigent care. This means less local burden for indigent care for eligible Counties, including Travis.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 874	Hegar	Companion is HB 1851. Stipulates that health care ministries, which are faith-based non-profit organizations which match persons struggling to pay medical bills with those able/willing to provide financial assistance to them, may limit its participants to individuals of a certain faith and must disclose in writing that the ministry is not a source of health insurance and operates per the voluntary actions of individuals.	If implemented locally, may mitigate economic hardship for individuals and families unable to pay medical bills. Proliferation of innovative third-party payer mechanisms is an important policy area to monitor, as these can reduce local uncompensated care costs and increase the economic stability and self-sufficiency of low-income families struggling with medical bills.	6/14/13 Signed by Governor
SB 886	Uresti	Revises guidelines for trial independence and extended foster care for certain young adults, as well as extended jurisdiction of a court in a suit affecting the parent-child relationship with this population.	Would allow young adults who are 18 and in the foster care system to enter into an extended foster care up to the age of 21. Will allow for the drawdown of new federal dollars in reimbursements to DFPS for the care of these young adults. For any Travis County participation in trial independence, federal funding would be increased. Could improve	6/14/13 Signed by Governor

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Bill No	Author	Description	Local Impact	Status
SB 920	Eltife	Identical to HBs 1995 and 2245. Amends the Texas Labor Code in compliance with federal law requiring states to codify that individuals must be actively seeking work in order to qualify for unemployment benefits.	Unclear since Texas Workforce Commission already follows this eligibility requirement through Commission Rule 815.28.	05/18/2013 signed by Governor
SB 939	West	Identical to HB 2495. Requires the Texas Education Agency to revise school policy relating to reporting child abuse and neglect. Requires new school employee orientation to include child abuse and neglect training.	Would increase reports of child abuse and neglect reports by school employees.	6/14/13 Signed by the Governor
SB 1150	Hinojosa	Makes a number of reforms to Medicaid Managed Care that protect Medicaid providers, including prompt and correct payment and timely credentialing. Identical to HB 3712.	May increase the number of providers willing to participate in Medicaid. May reduce the number of providers dropping out of participation in the program. These results, if achieved, might increase the number of Medicaid recipients who are able to access a provider in a timely manner.	6/14/13 Signed by the Governor
SB 1221	Paxton	Requires that a health plan obtain a health care provider's written consent before using a Medicaid-based fee schedule for reimbursement for services covered under a commercial health insurance plan.	Intent unclear.	6/14/13 Signed by the Governor
SB 1542	Van de Putte	Companion HB 1389. Mandates quality improvement for Medicaid clinical services.	Could provide strategies for better clinical outcomes for Medicaid patients. May also reveal some ways to increase efficiency in clinical practices. Any improvement in efficiency could mean less opposition to expansion of coverage to greater numbers of County residents.	6/14/13 Signed by the Governor
SB 1589	Zaffirini	Requires foster care providers to arrange or assist foster children over the age of 14 with experiential life-skills training, including a financial literacy education program and college preparation.	May improve the transition from foster care to independent living and promote overall quality of life for this vulnerable population.	05/24/2013 Signed by Governor